Liverpool University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information

Tocilizumab for Treatment of COVID-19

Pharmacy

Patient Name:

Date Tocilizumab administered:

What is Tocilizumab and what is the reason for using it COVID-19?

Tocilizumab is a biological agent that is licensed to reduce inflammation in a number of conditions (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis).

In COVID 19 infection it is believed that an increase in the number of interleukin-6 (IL-6) proteins in your body cause inflammation which affects your lungs and makes you very unwell. Tocilizumab blocks these IL-6 proteins and helps to reduce the inflammation.

Using tocilizumab in COVID-19 is outside of the normal product license for this drug, however NHS England has approved the use of this treatment under strict criteria based on the recent results of several large clinical trials, including REMAP-CAP in patients in ICU/HDU and RECOVERY in hospitalised patients.

Results from the RECOVERY trial has shown that by giving Tocilizumab to patients with oxygen saturations of <92% and raised inflammation markers, alongside steroids, we can:

- Reduce the risk of death within the first 28 days of admission.
- Reduce the need for invasive mechanical ventilation support.
- Reduces time in hospital by just over a week.

As this is a new treatment, our understanding or use of it may change as more research comes out.

How is the drug given?

It will be given by intravenous infusion into a vein in your arm over 60 minutes.

The dose given is based on how much you weigh.

What are the potential side effects?

All medications, including Tocilizumab, carry the risk of severe allergic reaction.

- **Mild reactions include:**
  Mild fever, chills, nausea, headache, itching, dizziness and cough
- **Moderate reactions include:**
  Chest pain, shortness of breath, low or high blood pressure, palpitations, itchy rash, high temperature.
- **Severe reaction include:**
  Anaphylaxis- This is a severe allergy leading to difficulty in breathing, airway swelling, and low or high blood pressure. This is relatively rare and usually happens after repeated doses. No cases of anaphylaxis have been seen in the clinical trials using Tocilizumab in severe COVID-19.

Tocilizumab can alter blood results, including liver enzyme increase, lipid levels (such as cholesterol) increase and platelet count decrease.

Stevens-Johnson syndrome - A rare but serious disorder of skin and mucous membranes.

Tocilizumab can increase your susceptibility to infection.

If you have been exposed to Tuberculosis or hepatitis in the past, there is a theoretical risk that this medication may reactivate these infections.

Who can I tell about my side effects?

Please report any side effects to the MHRA via the Yellow Card Scheme. Reports are confidential and help to improve the safety of medicines.

Report side effects on the website (visit https://yellowcard.mhra.gov/uk/ or search for Yellow Card Scheme and on the Yellow Card App on the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

Coronavirus specific Yellow Card reporting is available via the website (https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/).

Contraception

Women of child-bearing potential **must** use effective contraception for **three months** after receiving a dose of Tocilizumab.

There is currently no data on safety of Tocilizumab in pregnant women.

Reasons why you would not be suitable to receive tocilizumab

- Known allergy to tocilizumab.
- Another active, severe infection which is not considered to be under control by current antibiotics.
- Signs of severe liver impairment.
- A low platelet count before starting treatment.

- Strong suspicion of latent TB.
- If you are pregnant.
- If your inflammatory marker (CRP) is sufficiently raised.
- A condition or treatment resulting in on-going significant suppression of the immune system, including: a low white blood cell count, recent chemotherapy, the use of biological immunosuppressants or high-dose steroids for another long-term condition.

Once you're at home:

Immunosuppression and risk of infection

Tocilizumab will supress your immune system and so there is an increased risk of infection for **at least one month** after you have your dose. Avoid coming into contact with anyone known to have chickenpox or shingles during this timeframe.

It will be very important that you seek medical advice should you become unwell or if you show any signs of infection (e.g. high temperature).

Live vaccines

Certain (live) vaccines should be avoided for **12 months** after you have received Tocilizumab unless advised by your doctor.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Disclaimer

This leaflet does not replace the patient information leaflet issued with your medicines, but you should read it in conjunction with them.

Further information

Pharmacy Departments

Royal Liverpool Hospital
Tel: 0151 706 2092
Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2092

Aintree Hospital
Tel: 0151 525 5980
Text phone number: 18001 0151 525 5980

Broadgreen Hospital
Tel: 0151 282 6056
Text phone Number: 18001 0151 282 6056

Author: Pharmacy
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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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